(d) The period of working permission granted to Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd. has been extended by a period of one year w.e.f. 25.7.2000 so as to enable the company to continue its operations. One of the conditions for the working permission is that the environmental impact assessment study be got completed within a period of six months.

Decline in prices of indigenous cereals and oil seeds due to lifting of QRS on imports

†*394. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of indigenous cereals and oilseeds in various States of the country are decreasing sharply due to lifting of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of 714 articles under the pressure of World Trade Organizations (WTO);

(b) whether Government have pushed the farmers and cottage industry on the verge of destruction by giving permission of free import of these items and now Uttar Pradesh has been affected after the Punjab; and

(c) if so, under what pressure Government have taken these steps?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Import of all major cereals as classified under Chapter 10 of ITC (HS) classification of Export and Import Items, 1997—2002 is restricted and canalized through Food Corporation of India. Import of all edible oils excepting coconut oil as classified under chapter 15 of ITC (HS) Classifications of Export and Import Items, 1997-2002, is presently free. Import of all refined edible oil excluding coconut oil, Palm kernel oil, RBD palm oil and RBD palm stearin was made free prior to 01.04.96. As can be seen from the import data of edible oil furnished below, India has always been a net importer of edible oils.

Year	Vegetable oil (Edible)	
	Qty. (in tons)	Value (in Rs. Crore)
1995-96	1061988	2261.9
1996-97	1415794	2929.1
1997-98	1265753	2764.6
1998-99	2378566	7131.4
1999-2000 (April-January)	3671232	7099.7

(Figures are provisional) [Source: DGCI & S, Calcutta]

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

Government is absolutely determined to ensure through appropriate use of tariff mechanism that imports do not cause any detriment or injury to domestic farmers. Towards that end, Government has increased duties on a number of agricultural items where a surge in imports was noticed or apprehended. For example, the duty on arecanut has been raised to 100%, on poultry products to 100%, on wheat to 50%, on skimmed milk powder to 60%, on apple to 50%, on rice to 80%, on coconut to 35% and on coconut oil to 45%. India's tariff bindings at W.T.O. for most of the agricultural items are fairly high and effective rates of customs duties can be raised to those levels, in case there is any evidence of substantial increase in imports.

Government is aware of the emerging scenario for the SSI Units and cottage industries and has taken several steps to help them become globally competitive. These include special focus on areas such as technology up-gradation, infrastructure assistance through the cluster approach, timely availability of credit, adoption of modern management practices, use of electronic infrastructure, marketing and timely information dissemination, including sensitization of small industries to the emerging challenges of trade liberalization. Besides, a Group of Ministers has been entrusted with the task of suggesting ways and means of strengthening the SSI sector. Government has also constituted an Inter-Ministerial Group to study the impact of removal of quantitative restrictions.

India has been following a continuous policy of removing import restrictions since 1991, as part of economic liberalization programme and also in accordance with multilateral trading arrangements and not under any pressures.

Compromise on QR on Import

*395. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how many and exactly what are the agricultural items which are included in 714 items where the Quantitative Restriction (QR) for import has been compromised; and

(b) the details of all 1429 (714+715) items on which the QR will be totally compromised to facilitate unhindered market exploitation by the foreign countries?